

# Command and Control of Guerrilla Groups in the Philippines, 1941-1945

A Monograph

by

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2017

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 25-05-2017		<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> SAMS Monograph		<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b> JUNE 2016 – MAY 2017	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> Command and Control of Guerrilla Groups in the Philippines, 1941-1945				<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> MAJ Thomas R. Nypaver				<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b>	
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) 201 Reynolds Avenue Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2134				<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Command and General Staff College 731 McClellan Avenue Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1350				<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b> CGSC	
				<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b>	
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited					
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>					
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> <p>This historical case study uses primary and secondary sources to examine guerrilla operations during the period from the Japanese invasion of the Philippines on December 8, 1941, to the liberation of Manila on March 4, 1945. Previous studies summarized guerrilla activities but did not focus on command and control. This study focuses on the command and control relationship between Southwest Pacific Area Headquarters and guerrilla forces. This examination consists of five sections. First, the introduction provides background and a literature review. Second, it reviews the command and control relationship with Col. Wendell Fertig's guerrillas on Mindanao. Third, it reviews the command and control relationships on Luzon. Fourth and finally, it concludes with summary observations and analysis of whether command and control mechanisms allowed Southwest Pacific Area and subordinate headquarters to arrange guerrilla operations in time, space, and purpose toward strategic objectives.</p>					
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Guerrilla warfare; unconventional warfare; command and control; mission command; World War II; Philippines; Wendell Fertig; Russell Volckmann					
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>  (U)	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b>  46	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b> Major Thomas R. Nypaver
<b>a. REPORT</b> (U)	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b> (U)	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b> (U)			<b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (include area code) 913-684-4021

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1941-1945

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## Abstract

Command and Control of Guerrilla Groups in the Philippines, 1941-1945, by MAJ Thomas R. Nypaver, Texas Army National Guard, 46 pages.

This historical case study uses primary and secondary sources to examine guerrilla operations during the period from the Japanese invasion of the Philippines on December 8, 1941, to the liberation of Manila on March 4, 1945. Previous studies summarized guerrilla activities but did not focus on command and control. This study focuses on the command and control relationship between Southwest Pacific Area Headquarters and guerrilla forces. This examination consists of five sections. First, the introduction provides background and a literature review. Second, it reviews the command and control relationship with Col. Wendell Fertig's guerrillas on Mindanao. Third, it reviews the command and control relationships on Luzon. Fourth and finally, it concludes with summary observations and analysis of whether command and control mechanisms allowed Southwest Pacific Area and subordinate headquarters to arrange guerrilla operations in time, space, and purpose toward strategic objectives.

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## Acronyms

AIB	Allied Intelligence Bureau
FAIT	Fil-American Irregular Troops
GHQ	General Headquarters
LGAF	Luzon Guerrilla Armed Forces
PRS	Philippine Regional Section
SPYRON	Spy Squadron
SWPA	Southwest Pacific Area
USAFFE	United States Armed Forces in the Far East
USAFIP-NL	United States Army Forces in the Philippines–North Luzon
USASOC	US Army Special Operations Command

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## Introduction

The war in the Pacific began with the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Nine hours later, the Japanese air force destroyed American planes on the ground in the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> The Japanese invaded the Philippines on December 10. Allied forces on Luzon evacuated Manila and withdrew to the Bataan Peninsula. US Army forces surrendered at Bataan on April 11, 1942. By early May, the remaining American forces on Corregidor surrendered.

Prior to the fall of the Philippines, Gen. Douglas MacArthur initiated plans to establish a guerrilla structure in the islands. Historian David W. Hogan notes that MacArthur assigned officers to organize a resistance movement—Col. Claude A. Thorp on Luzon, and Maj. Gen. William F. Sharp on Mindanao. The Japanese invasion cut these plans short.<sup>2</sup> After Corregidor fell on May 6, 1941, many senior American commanders obeyed Maj. Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright's order to surrender. Other Americans and many Philippine army members disregarded the surrender order, evaded the Japanese, and formed resistance movements. At this point, US headquarters had minimal contact with the guerrillas, and thus, no meaningful command and control over resistance elements. MacArthur's *Reports* describe the guerrilla campaign as unfolding in three phases:

Phase One consisting of the initial exploration of the guerrilla movement by the Allied Intelligence Bureau..., Phase Two comprising its development under the Philippine Regional Section, and Phase Three composed of the merging of all guerrilla activities with the actual invasion of the Philippines.<sup>3</sup>

However, the phasing concept in this case seems *ex post facto*, rather than descriptive of any initial design. Especially in its early days, the trajectory of the guerrilla movement was more a result of emergence than intention.

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 9.

<sup>2</sup> David W. Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1992), 65.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas MacArthur, *Reports of General MacArthur: The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1994), 298.



The formation of guerrilla groups was chaotic. American servicemen focused on survival and evading the Japanese. Although they found much support from the populace, the Americans initially did not know whom they could trust. Filipinos formed groups as well. MacArthur's *Reports* classified three main types of guerrilla groups: those built around American and Philippine servicemen; purely local groups; and partisan groups from existing "semi-political" organizations.<sup>4</sup> Bandit groups formed to take advantage of the turmoil, and Filipino vigilante groups grew in response. Meanwhile, Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) headquarters in Australia had little information on the status of these guerrilla groups. A single guerrilla radio station on Luzon was in contact with SWPA from December 1942 until February 1943, when the Japanese captured the radio set. Beginning in October 1942, escapees from the Philippines began to trickle into SWPA headquarters with information on guerrilla activities.<sup>5</sup>

As the situation matured, SWPA established communications with guerrilla leaders and incorporated guerrilla forces into the plans to retake the Philippines. On Mindanao and the middle Visayan Islands, SWPA established command and control through the efforts of Cmdr. Charles 'Chick' Parsons and the organization known as Spy Squadron (SPYRON). A joint effort, SPYRON fell under the US Navy's 7th Fleet, but SWPA's intelligence section administered the program through the Allied Intelligence Bureau and the Philippine Regional Section. SPYRON maintained contact with guerrillas from August 1942 to the invasion of Leyte in October 1944.

Once Parsons vetted guerrilla leaders and provided supplies, command and control occurred via radio networks. On Luzon, guerrilla leaders did not have reliable radio communications with SWPA until August 1944. As on other islands, once SWPA established command and control, the guerrillas received supplies and SWPA integrated guerrillas into the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 301.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 300.

combat plans of American combat units. As a result, SWPA was able to arrange guerrilla operations in time, space, and purpose.

This monograph uses official records, military history publications, historical works, theses and dissertations, and biographies as sources. The official records are proximate to the events, but often lack the context provided by the biographies and autobiographies. The histories and theses provide general summaries and investigations of specific aspects of the guerrilla movement. However, none of the sources focuses entirely on the issue of command and control. Thus, the aggregation of these sources is necessary to the question of this monograph.

The official records serve as primary sources. Most useful among these are those in the Intelligence Series by General Headquarters US Army Forces, Pacific. The *Brief History* provides an overview of the series. The first volume focuses on the guerrilla movement, while the second of the series records the intelligence organizations. All are based on guerrilla messages and interviews, intelligence reports, and miscellaneous documents.<sup>6</sup> Next in importance are the *Reports of General MacArthur*. The first volume recounts the American Pacific campaign from the Japanese invasion of the Philippines to the Japanese surrender and includes a chapter on the guerrilla movement. The second reviews Japanese operations during the same period.<sup>7</sup> The final group of official records includes unit histories. These are I Corps' *History of the Luzon Campaign*, the *History of X Corps on Mindanao*, XIV Corps' *After Action Report*, 38th Infantry Division's "Report on the M-7 Operation," and the reports of Sixth US Army on Luzon. These reports provide insights on how the

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<sup>6</sup> Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, *A Brief History of the G-2 Section, General Headquarters (GHQ), SWPA and Affiliated Units* (GHQ, Far East Command, 1948); Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, *The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines* (GHQ, US Army Forces, Pacific, 1948); Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines during the Japanese Occupation*, vol. 2 (GHQ, US Army, Pacific, 1948).

<sup>7</sup> Douglas MacArthur, *Reports of General MacArthur: Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, vol. 2, part 1 (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1994); Douglas MacArthur, *Reports of General MacArthur: Japanese Occupations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, vol. 2, part 2 (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1994); MacArthur, *Reports*, vol. 1.

command and control relationship changed to integrate guerrilla forces into invasion plans and conveys perspectives about the effectiveness of guerrilla forces.<sup>8</sup>

The military histories of the Philippine theater offer varying detail on guerrilla activities. *US Army Special Operations in World War II* devotes a chapter to the subject. *Triumph in the Philippines* contains extensive references to guerrilla resistance. *The Fall of the Philippines* provides a vignette on early guerrilla preparations on Panay. *Leyte: Return to the Philippines* contains a subsection of a chapter describing the resistance movement there. *Luzon* provides a thorough summary of the Luzon campaign, but limited, generalized references to guerrilla activities.<sup>9</sup> The first is most instructive to this research while the others provide useful context. Another useful history is *MacArthur's Undercover War: Spies, Saboteurs, Guerrillas, and Secret Missions*, by William Breuer. While Breuer provides minimal references to the guerrillas themselves, he does describe more fully the larger support architecture, including the Allied Intelligence Bureau and the Philippine Regional Section.<sup>10</sup>

The biographies center on American commanders of guerrilla units but also include other perspectives from those who interacted with the guerrillas. The autobiographies include those of Russell Volckmann, Edwin Ramsey, and Robert Lapham.<sup>11</sup> All commanded guerrilla units on

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<sup>8</sup> Sixth US Army, "Report of the Luzon Campaign: 9 January 1945-30 June 1945," (1945); US Army I Corps, *History of the Luzon Campaign* (1945); US Army X Corps, *History of X Corps on Mindanao, 17 April 45-30 June 45* (1945); Headquarters, 38th Infantry Division, "Historical Report of the M-7 Operation: The Avengers of Bataan, 19 January 1945 to 30 June 1945" (1945); US Army XIV Corps, "After Action Report, M-1 Operation: Part I, Operations" (1945).

<sup>9</sup> M. Hamlin Cannon, *Leyte: The Return to the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1954); Hogan, *Special Operations in World War II*; Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1953); Robert Ross Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1963); Dale Andrade, *Luzon* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> William B. Breuer, *MacArthur's Undercover War: Spies, Saboteurs, Guerrillas, and Secret Missions* (New York: J. Wiley and Sons, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Lapham and Bernard Norling, *Lapham's Raiders: Guerrillas in the Philippines, 1942-1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996); Edwin Price Ramsey and Stephen J. Rivele, *Lieutenant Ramsey's War: From Horse Soldier to Guerrilla Commander* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1996); Russell W. Volckmann, *We Remained: Three Years Behind Enemy Lines in the Philippines* (New York: Norton, 1954).

Luzon. The biographies of American guerrilla commanders include those on Wendell Fertig, Russell Volckmann, Donald Blackburn, Ralph Praeger, and Henry Bell.<sup>12</sup> This study uses John Keats' *They Fought Alone*, though this biography of Fertig is less thorough and possibly more biased by Fertig's inputs compared to works that are more recent.<sup>13</sup> Other biographies include those of Charles Parsons, whose official title was Chief of Supply for the Philippine Regional Section and Gen. Douglas MacArthur.<sup>14</sup> D. Clayton James' biography of MacArthur contains a concise summary of guerrilla operations during the Japanese occupation.<sup>15</sup>

The theses and dissertations provide comprehensive summaries of the Filipino guerrilla history. Larry Schmidt's "American Involvement in the Filipino Resistance Movement on Mindanao during the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945" is a highly detailed master's thesis. He considers the effects of geography, culture, Japanese policy, and external Allied support on the Mindanao resistance movement. His chapters on external support and operational employment are most relevant to this inquiry. Schmidt also emphasizes the moral and symbolic contribution of the Mindanao guerrillas.<sup>16</sup> Michael Balis provides "The American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance during the Second World War." This master's thesis in history is valuable for its extensive use of the MacArthur archives at Norfolk, VA, and interviews of veterans who fought on

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<sup>12</sup> Mike Guardia, *Shadow Commander: The Epic Story of Donald D. Blackburn: Guerrilla Leader and Special Forces Hero* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2011); Kent Holmes, *Wendell Fertig and His Guerrilla Forces in the Philippines: Fighting the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010); Mike Guardia, *American Guerrilla: The Forgotten Heroics of Russell W. Volckmann: The Man Who Escaped Bataan, Raised a Filipino Army against the Japanese, and Became "Father" of Special Forces* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2010); Bernard Norling, *The Intrepid Guerrillas of North Luzon* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> John Keats, *They Fought Alone* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1963).

<sup>14</sup> Travis Ingham, *Rendezvous by Submarine: The Story of Charles Parsons and the Guerrilla-Soldiers in the Philippines* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1945); D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur*, vol. 2, 1941-1945 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970); Courtney Whitney, *MacArthur: His Rendezvous with History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956).

<sup>15</sup> James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 506-11.

<sup>16</sup> Larry S. Schmidt, "American Involvement in the Filipino Resistance Movement on Mindanao During the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1945" (master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1982).

Mindanao. Balis also gives detailed background on American and Filipino commanders on Mindanao and closer examination of specific tactical engagements.<sup>17</sup> Peter Sinclair's "Men of Destiny: The American and Filipino Guerrillas during the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines" considers Japanese counter-guerrilla efforts, guerrilla group formation, and the contribution of the guerrillas to the larger theater effort. Though Sinclair assesses the guerrillas' contribution as significant, he does not delve into detailed analysis of how guerrilla actions directly affected decisive combat actions in pursuit of strategic effects. Sinclair's monograph remains helpful to the present question in that it briefly assesses the role played by the Allied Intelligence Bureau and the Philippine Regional Section in establishing command and control for SWPA headquarters.<sup>18</sup> Grant Jerry's "All Those who Remained: The American-Led Guerrillas in the Philippines, 1942-1945" focuses exclusively on the resistance on Luzon. He specifically examines how the guerrillas developed intelligence, mobilized popular support, disrupted the Japanese, and integrated into major combat operations.<sup>19</sup> Michael Davis' "A Letter to All Guerrilleros" examines the motivations for joining guerrilla movements through the lens of the Mindanao resistance to understand how unconventional warfare can benefit a larger campaign.<sup>20</sup> Fernando Reyeg and Ned Marsh round out the theses with "The Filipino Way of War: Irregular Warfare through the Centuries." They review Filipino irregular warfare from the country's pre-colonial period through the post-independence era. They apply a framework that examines the environment, organization, tactics, doctrine, and technology of each phase of history. Their chapter on World War II is most useful.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Anthony Balis, "The American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance during the Second World War" (master's thesis, Old Dominion University, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> Peter T. Sinclair, "Men of Destiny: The American and Filipino Guerrillas during the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines" (master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Grant E. Jerry, "All Those Who Remained: The American-Led Guerrillas in the Philippines, 1942-1945" (master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Michael E. Davis, "A Letter to All Guerrilleros: Unifying the Mindanao Resistance Movement and Unconventional Warfare" (master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Fernando M. Reyeg and Ned B. Marsh, "The Filipino Way of War: Irregular Warfare through the Centuries" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011).

This monograph examines how SWPA exercised command and control on the islands of Mindanao and Luzon. The conclusion compares and contrasts the observations from the various locations. It identifies how SWPA exercised command and control to arrange guerrilla operations in time, space, and purpose. Ultimately, it seeks to answer whether constraints of technology and the non-permissive environment in the Japanese-occupied Philippines caused SWPA headquarters to exert command and control in a manner that encouraged disciplined initiative. It finds that SWPA employed mission-type orders that effectively decentralized command and control prior to the Allied invasion, at which time guerrillas either came under direct command or close control of Army- and Corps-level commanders.

## Mindanao Guerrillas

An island where extremes are commonplace; where are found fertile soil and worthless swamp; fine natural harbors and cruel rocky reefs; coastlines from steep hills to smooth sandy beaches; transportation from luxury airliner to carabao cart; inhabitants from educated Americans and Europeans to tree-dwelling pagans—this is Mindanao, the southernmost and second largest island in the Philippine Archipelago.

—History of X Corps on Mindanao

Mindanao's five volcanic mountain chains include the tallest mountain in the Philippines. Vegetation on Mindanao is predominantly jungle and swamp, but also contains coastal plains and arable basins. Two rivers provided inland access, but there were no railroads and only two highways at the outbreak of World War II.<sup>22</sup> Mindanao is culturally distinct for its large population of Muslims known as "Moros". In 1941, there were over 20,000 Japanese nationals living in the port city of Davao on Mindanao's southern coast.<sup>23</sup> The Japanese strategy called for occupying the Philippines to deny American basing, to secure Japanese lines of communication, and to create basing for Japanese operations in the South Pacific.<sup>24</sup> The Japanese planned an economy-of-force

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<sup>22</sup> Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, 498.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>24</sup> MacArthur, *Reports*, vol. 2, part 1, 79.

action in Mindanao, Jolo, and the Sulu chain to establish airfields to block American northbound supply lines and any southward retrograde movements, and to create staging bases for the invasion of Borneo.<sup>25</sup>



Figure 1. Southern Philippine Provinces. David W. Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1992), 72.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 82; Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, 98.

Philippine army units, some led by US Army officers, defended Mindanao. In general, the Philippine army was not prepared to face the Japanese and critically undersupplied.<sup>26</sup> At dawn on December 20, 1941, a 5,000-man Japanese force invaded Davao. The 2,000-3,500-man Filipino-American force realized that they were about to be overwhelmed and withdrew to the northwest hills.<sup>27</sup> The Japanese gained a foothold on Mindanao, controlling the city, its harbor, and nearby airfields. On January 3, 1942, Brig. Gen. William F. Sharp, commander of the Visayan-Mindanao task force, moved his headquarters from Cebu to Del Monte airfield in northern Mindanao, southeast of Cagayan City. Sharp organized Mindanao forces into five sectors and continued the training of the Philippine Army. In January 1942, the Japanese secured footholds in Davao and Zamboanga.

General MacArthur stopped on Mindanao during his escape from the Philippines. From March 13 to 16, MacArthur met with Sharp and Brig. Gen. Bradford D. Chynoweth. MacArthur split the Visayan-Mindanao command in two, assigning Sharp to command on Mindanao and Chynoweth in the Visayas. He instructed both generals to conduct guerrilla warfare if Luzon fell so that Allied forces might use these islands to retake Luzon. Despite MacArthur's confidence in Sharp's ability to see a guerrilla fight through its course, MacArthur's biographer D. Clayton James finds that age and physical and mental abilities made Sharp "simply unfit for that job."<sup>28</sup> On April 29, the Japanese began a multi-pronged operation to control additional cities, ports, and highways on Mindanao. Later, the Japanese would plan to push the Filipino and American forces on Mindanao inland. Thereafter, the Japanese intended to encircle and destroy the defenders.<sup>29</sup>

Col. Wendell Fertig, US Army Reserve, landed on Mindanao on April 30. Though he did not know it at the time, he would become the commander of guerrilla forces on the island. On May

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<sup>26</sup> Balis, "American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance," 499-500.

<sup>27</sup> MacArthur, *Reports*, vol. 2, part 1, 93; Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, 113.

<sup>28</sup> James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 105.

<sup>29</sup> Balis, "American Influence on the Mindanao," 11-12; Morton, 508-9.



6, Corregidor fell to the Japanese. In the ensuing fog of war, Maj. Gen. Wainwright informed Sharp that Wainwright was no longer in command and that Sharp should communicate directly with General MacArthur. Unaware of these communications, MacArthur also instructed Sharp to communicate directly with him at SWPA headquarters.<sup>30</sup> Then on May 7, Wainwright telegraphed Sharp from Corregidor telling Sharp that if Sharp did not surrender all US forces on Mindanao, the Japanese would resume the attack on Corregidor and exact reprisals on the American prisoners on Luzon.<sup>31</sup> Per MacArthur's earlier message, Sharp consulted MacArthur directly. The SWPA commander replied, "Orders emanating from General Wainwright have no validity. If possible, separate your force into small elements and initiate guerrilla operations. You, of course, have full authority to make any decision that immediate emergency may demand."<sup>32</sup> As Sharp deliberated, Japanese operations on Mindanao gained momentum on May 8. By May 9, the Japanese had broken the northern defenses on Mindanao and destroyed the bulk of Sharp's force, though the command post at Del Monte remained intact.<sup>33</sup> On May 9, Sharp met with a colonel from Wainwright's staff. On May 10, he decided to call off guerrilla operations and surrender his troops.<sup>34</sup>

However, the troops had other ideas. Many who surrendered did so reluctantly.<sup>35</sup> Since the Mindanao forces were primarily Philippine Army soldiers, most could hide their weapons and blend into the populace. Others did not surrender due to coincidental circumstance. Such was the case for Wendell Fertig.

Fertig worked as a mining engineer throughout the Philippines prior to the war. In June 1941, he visited Brig. Gen. Hugh Casey, MacArthur's chief engineer, while on a trip to Manila. Casey convinced Fertig to put his reserve commission to use and join the cause. Fertig resumed

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<sup>30</sup> Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, 574.

<sup>31</sup> James, *The Years of MacArthur*, 148.

<sup>32</sup> Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, 574.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 519.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 576-77.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 577-78.

service as a major assigned to Bataan. By November, he was a lieutenant colonel in charge of construction. In April 1942, Fertig evacuated to Corregidor and then got a standby seat on a flight for Australia. However, during the layover on Mindanao, Sharp recruited Fertig to join his staff.<sup>36</sup> While on a demolitions mission near Cagayan on May 2, Fertig and Capt. Charles Hedges received an order to return to the headquarters at Del Monte. Chance intervened when the Japanese began shelling the city. Fertig and Hedges chose to take an inland backroad toward Lanao rather than the coastal road to Del Monte. Fertig learned of Sharp's surrender order of May 10 but rationalized that it did not apply since he technically belonged to General Casey's command. During his evasion, Fertig witnessed the cruelty of the Japanese conducting a forced march of American prisoners of war and determined that he would continue to resist.<sup>37</sup>

The Japanese occupation of Mindanao resulted in a vacuum of power. In this chaotic period, competing groups sought to resolve old grievances and gain whatever advantages they could. The Moro clans resumed their cultural interpretation of jihad, reigniting the religious conflict with Catholic Filipinos that had smoldered since 1915.<sup>38</sup> As the Moros began to run amok in May 1942, Filipino resistance forces emerged to provide protection against both the Moros and the Japanese.

Philippine constabulary Capt. Luis Morgan approached Fertig with an offer to command Morgan's group of two to five hundred Filipino guerrillas. Morgan hoped that American leadership would consolidate the growing Filipino resistance and pacify the Moros.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, the Japanese did not have sufficient troop strength to hold terrain. The Japanese would commonly conduct a

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<sup>36</sup> Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 11-17.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-25.

<sup>38</sup> For an extended discussion of the Moros, see Schmidt, "American Involvement in the Filipino Resistance," 155-67.

<sup>39</sup> Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 27-30.

show of force and then retreat from the areas too distant from their garrisons.<sup>40</sup> The ratio of Japanese troops to the residents of Mindanao was approximately 1:100. Unable physically to control terrain beyond four major cities with so few troops, the Japanese resorted to terror tactics to subjugate the populace.<sup>41</sup> Rather than co-opting the ongoing enmity between Moros and Filipinos, the Japanese likewise threatened to kill the families of any Moros engaged in fighting.<sup>42</sup> In this context, Fertig decided to accept Morgan's offer to command the guerrillas in September 1942. Fertig also joined Morgan in advancing a ruse that presented Fertig as a general officer sent from Australia by MacArthur.

The gambit was the catalyst that would begin the process of implementing command and control over the Mindanao resistance. It had three effects. First, it gave Fertig the *bona fides* needed to begin talks with Moro clan leaders and consolidate the support of Filipino guerrilla bands. Second, it provoked actions from SWPA to confirm rumors of a US Army general operating on Mindanao. Third, it prompted other American officers isolated on Mindanao to make contact with Fertig and ultimately embed under his task organization. Fertig's consolidation of control over the guerrillas of Mindanao was not immediate, but over time, he employed governmental, economic, informational, and military means to grow the movement.<sup>43</sup>

The next step toward greater command and control over the guerrillas on Mindanao was the establishment of radio contact with SWPA Headquarters. After several months of attempts with improvised radio sets, Fertig's signal detachment made contact with Western Defense Command in San Francisco in January 1943. However, the receiving station believed the transmissions were under either duress or direct Japanese control. Western Defense Command would not relay the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>41</sup> Balis, "American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance," 14-15.

<sup>42</sup> Schmidt, "American Involvement in the Filipino Resistance," 161.

<sup>43</sup> Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 37-47; Davis, "A Letter to All Guerrilleros," 21-25.

messages to MacArthur until they verified the transmissions as legitimate.<sup>44</sup> Finally, in February 1943, SWPA communicated with Fertig directly. MacArthur attempted to bolster morale, promised supplies, reminded Fertig that he was not a general, and the lieutenant colonel to focus on intelligence.<sup>45</sup> Though MacArthur confirmed Fertig as the commander of 10th Military District (Mindanao and Sulu Archipelago), he would soon send Cmdr. Charles Parsons to vet the decision.

Parsons worked in the shipping industry prior to the conflict and knew both the culture and geography of the Philippines. During Japanese occupation, he passed himself off as a Panamanian consul and used that status to evacuate with his family. A former friend recruited Parsons to the service, and MacArthur ensured Parsons' assignment to Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) at SWPA headquarters.<sup>46</sup>

Though unit histories record Parsons as the Chief of Supply for the Philippine Regional Section, he played a larger role than the title implies.<sup>47</sup> In February 1943, Parsons launched from Australia in a US Navy submarine to make contact with and resupply guerrillas throughout the southern islands. MacArthur gave Parsons "full authority to recognize the leader of a movement on any of the islands." Parsons met with Fertig on Mindanao on March 5 and confirmed Fertig's role as commander. Parsons also clarified MacArthur's intent, telling Fertig, "Under no circumstances are your men to go out in open warfare against the Japanese. Harass the enemy, ambush his patrols, watch his every move on land and sea—but don't engage him in battle or go against his garrisons."<sup>48</sup> Fertig suggested that the movement needed victories to preserve guerrilla morale, but Parsons explained that the guerrillas' primary purpose supported the strategic objective of destroying the Japanese navy. Parsons told Fertig to establish coast-watching stations so that American submarines

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<sup>44</sup> Schmidt, "American Involvement in the Filipino Resistance," 100-1, 148; Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 49.

<sup>45</sup> Schmidt, "American Involvement in the Filipino Resistance," 101; Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 50.

<sup>46</sup> Breuer, *MacArthur's Undercover War*, 83-85.

<sup>47</sup> Military Intelligence Section, *The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines*, iii.

<sup>48</sup> Ingham, *Rendezvous by Submarine*, 61.

could interdict Japanese sea lines of communication.<sup>49</sup> Parsons' confirmation of Fertig and instructions to him illustrate two of SWPA's key assumptions. First, they reasoned that formally recognizing the strongest guerrilla commander on each would mitigate the risk of civil war and conflict among guerrilla groups.<sup>50</sup> Second, SWPA assumed that large-scale guerrilla attacks would trigger Japanese counteroffensives and reprisals against the population.

Sending Parsons as MacArthur's representative was a significant factor in SWPA's success in gaining command and control over the guerrillas on Mindanao and other islands. MacArthur used what we might describe today as a "mission command philosophy" in that he granted Parsons the authority to make a decision on the general's behalf. This authority expedited the process of mobilizing the guerrillas toward specific intelligence objectives. Furthermore, face-to-face communications enhanced command and control by reducing the fog of war. Even though radio communications were available, message traffic alone could not provide the information needed to determine any leader fit to command. Face-to-face communications helped to ensure that there were no misunderstandings or false assumptions by either party.

With MacArthur's appointment of command, Fertig would consolidate control over the other guerrilla bands on Mindanao. American officers accepted the need for a unified command and accepted Fertig as their leader.<sup>51</sup> For good measure, Fertig promoted many of the American officers.<sup>52</sup>

Filipinos idolized MacArthur.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the propaganda items brought by submarine helped to convince them of Fertig's legitimacy. Despite tensions between Moros and Filipinos, the Moros still respected the US military. Thus, Fertig was able to barter a truce between the Moros and

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<sup>49</sup> Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 63.

<sup>50</sup> Balis, "American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance," 52-54.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>52</sup> Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 40.

<sup>53</sup> Hogan, *Special Operations in World War II*, 68.

Filipinos.<sup>54</sup> American officers embedded with some of the Moro groups and eventually won them over.<sup>55</sup> SWPA G-2 Maj. Gen. Charles Willoughby summarized Fertig's main advantage rather bluntly, "Fertig's influence at present stems from his being the source of supplies from the SWPA, and that he is the officially recognized CO [commanding officer] of the 10th MD [Military District]."<sup>56</sup> However, Willoughby had a jaundiced view of guerrillas.<sup>57</sup> His skepticism overlooks Fertig's critical advantage of having radio communications with SWPA. While Parsons' appointment of Fertig might simply have been expedient, and largely due to Fertig's ability to consolidate most of the guerrilla bands, it might also reflect a recognition that communications allowing command and control were a higher priority than combat or command experience.

In June 1943, the Japanese began a series of offensives against the guerrillas aimed at destroying the 10th District Headquarters. These operations disrupted and dispersed the guerrillas, causing Fertig to move his command post from Misamis to Lanao and finally to Agusan Province. The effects of this Japanese push were that Fertig relocated his headquarters to a more defensible position and, in January 1944, he established "A Corps" in western Mindanao to better control the guerrilla units there and create continuity of command in the event that he was killed or captured.<sup>58</sup>

After moving his headquarters in June 1943, Fertig clarified his orders to the Mindanao guerrillas. The primary mission was intelligence collection. Fertig announced a secondary mission to defeat the Japanese to ensure public support and therefore the survivability of the guerrillas.<sup>59</sup> Holmes suggests, "While this did not reflect the spirit of MacArthur's order to the guerrillas, Fertig

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<sup>54</sup> Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 41.

<sup>55</sup> Balis, "American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance," 27, 64.

<sup>56</sup> GHQ, SWPA, Military Intelligence Section, "Philippine Monthly Combined Situation Report, Orientation: Background of Development of Present PI Guerrilla Situation", No. 16, April 15, 1944, in *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines During the Japanese Occupation: Documentary Appendices*, vol. 2, 137.

<sup>57</sup> Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 127.

<sup>58</sup> Balis, "American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance," 69-71.; Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 104.

<sup>59</sup> Keats, *They Fought Alone*, 307.

believed that without active guerrilla operations the movement would not be able to maintain public support. Without public support intelligence collection would be somewhat tenuous.”<sup>60</sup>



Figure 2. Mindanao Guerrilla Organization as of January 31, 1945. Douglas MacArthur, *Reports of General MacArthur*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1994), 311.

Meanwhile, the Mindanao guerrillas were gaining traction. Parsons noted in a June 1943 report that the coast-watcher stations on Mindanao, Panay, and Negros were already bearing fruit. US Navy submarines had sunk Japanese vessels within sight of the coast watchers, which boosted guerrilla and popular morale. Additionally, the radio net on Mindanao was able to reach a radio receiver on Manila, which Allied Intelligence Bureau operatives had given to the Manila Intelligence Group, a growing network of influential agents on Luzon.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Holmes, Wendell Fertig, 107.

<sup>61</sup> Charles Parsons, “Report on the Conditions in the Philippine Islands,” GHQ, SWPA, Military Intelligence Section, G-2 Information Bulletin, June 1943, in *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines During the Japanese Occupation*, vol. 2. ed. Charles A. Willoughby (Tokyo: GHQ Far East Command, 1948), 15, 32.

In July 1943, SWPA reorganized the command of guerrilla operations. This restructuring transferred control of guerrilla activities from the Allied Intelligence Bureau to the newly created Philippine Regional Section.<sup>62</sup> MacArthur requested the transfer of Col. Courtney Whitney Sr. from the Pentagon to run the new section. Whitney was a friend of MacArthur with extensive experience in the Philippines. The general tasked Whitney to be the Chief of the Philippine Regional Section to oversee guerrilla and intelligence activities throughout the Philippines.<sup>63</sup> “MacArthur stressed that it would be left to Whitney’s imagination and ingenuity to achieve the objectives.”<sup>64</sup> Though the Philippine Regional Section (PRS) was ostensibly under the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB), Whitney reported directly to MacArthur’s chief of staff Gen. Richard K. Sutherland. Historian David Hogan suggests, “MacArthur’s grant of semi-independent status to the PRS...probably represented a tactic to remove Philippine affairs, in which he possessed both a national and personal interest, from any control of the Australian-dominated AIB.”<sup>65</sup> Schmidt notes MacArthur’s requirement for “absolute secrecy” of PRS operations.<sup>66</sup> Regardless of the motives for this reorganization, this transition had the effect of unifying command of the guerrillas under MacArthur directly.

Guerrilla intelligence reports from Mindanao provided SWPA with information on Japanese naval movements, base locations, troop dispositions, air activity, and bomb damage assessments.<sup>67</sup> Breuer contends that the reports that flowed from the clandestine radio network were the first thing that MacArthur read each day.<sup>68</sup> Some of these reports had significant effects.

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<sup>62</sup> Balis, “American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance,” 73.

<sup>63</sup> Schmidt, “American Involvement in the Filipino Resistance,” 189.

<sup>64</sup> Breuer, *MacArthur’s Undercover War*, 113.

<sup>65</sup> David W. Hogan, “MacArthur, Stillwell, and Special Operations in the War against Japan,” *Parameters* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 110.

<sup>66</sup> Schmidt, “American Involvement in the Filipino Resistance,” 194.

<sup>67</sup> Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 136-43.

<sup>68</sup> Breuer, *MacArthur’s Undercover War*, 113-14; Whitney, *MacArthur*, 132.



Guerrilla reports aided US Navy submarines in sinking over three hundred Japanese ships off the southern coast of Mindanao over two years.<sup>69</sup> On June 15, 1944, a coast watcher under Fertig's command reported Japanese ship movements through the San Bernardino Strait that gave early warning that allowed the US Navy to adjust its plan prior to the Battle of the Philippine Sea.<sup>70</sup> Eighth Army commander Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger was critical of information provided by guerrillas on other islands but believed that the Mindanao guerrillas were able to provide better intelligence because they were the best organized in the Philippines.<sup>71</sup>

In December 1943, Whitney advised Fertig to conduct mobile defense and ordered him not to issue heavy weapons that the PRS had sent to the guerrillas. Whitney wanted Fertig to conserve those resources for the US landings and feared that the increased firepower might provoke Japanese aggression or embolden Fertig to make a stand against a larger Japanese force. Fertig ignored the order and issued the weapons anyway since he believed the heavy weapons would allow him to delay Japanese advances and provide him the time he needed to move his headquarters.<sup>72</sup> From January to September 1944, the Japanese focused on trying to destroy Fertig's headquarters in Agusan province. Meanwhile, "A Corps" conducted a series of ambushes and offensive engagements that forced the Japanese into a more defensive posture in the west. This forced the Japanese to guard their bases and lines of communication, thus stealing resources from the effort to eliminate Fertig. Aided by guerrilla intelligence, American air raids in September 1944 first destroyed thirty-four Japanese planes on the airfield at Davao. By mid-September, US attacks

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<sup>69</sup> Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 56.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 143-44.; Balis, "American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance," 88; See also Scott Walker, *The Edge of Terror: The Heroic Story of American Families Trapped in Japanese-Occupied Philippines*, ed. David Easter (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009); William T. Y'Blood, *Red Sun Setting: The Battle of the Philippine Sea* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1981).

<sup>71</sup> Schmidt, "American Involvement in the Filipino Resistance," 228-29.

<sup>72</sup> Balis, "American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance," 74-75.

destroyed five hundred Japanese planes. The Japanese took this as a signal of an impending amphibious assault and began preparing their defenses, thus easing the pressure on the guerrillas.<sup>73</sup>

The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted to begin the retaking of the Philippines with an invasion of Mindanao due to the strength of the guerrilla forces there, but Adm. William F. Halsey argued for landings at Leyte due to the unexpected success brought about by the weakness of Japanese air defenses in Mindanao and the Visayas.<sup>74</sup> As Sixth Army invaded Leyte on October 20, 1944, Parsons radioed Fertig informing him that the American base would be on Leyte and that Fertig should not expect an invasion of Mindanao. MacArthur instructed Fertig to begin attacks against Japanese garrisons and to block Japanese efforts to move troops to Suriago province.<sup>75</sup>

From October 1944 to February 1945, Fertig's guerrillas continued intelligence activities and harassment of the Japanese on Mindanao. Fertig met with Eichelberger on Leyte in preparation of the invasion of Mindanao. Eichelberger believed that this unity of command was essential to producing simultaneous effects.<sup>76</sup>

The value of guerrillas was apparent from the start. During the initial landings of Operation Victor IV in Zamboanga from March 8-10, guerrilla control of airfields and beach landing sites allowed X Corps to land unopposed.<sup>77</sup> On March 20, 1945, Eighth Army directed X Corps to assault Mindanao and assume control of guerrilla forces.<sup>78</sup> As operations progressed, X Corps attached guerrilla formations to its units and tasked them to guard bases and lines of communications; block, clear, and destroy enemy forces; and act as guides for American units. Guerrilla attacks caused the Japanese garrison at Malabang to withdraw. Guerrilla intelligence

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 76-83.; Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 97-98.

<sup>74</sup> Schmidt, "American Involvement in the Filipino Resistance," 219; MacArthur, *Reports*, vol. 1, 172-73.

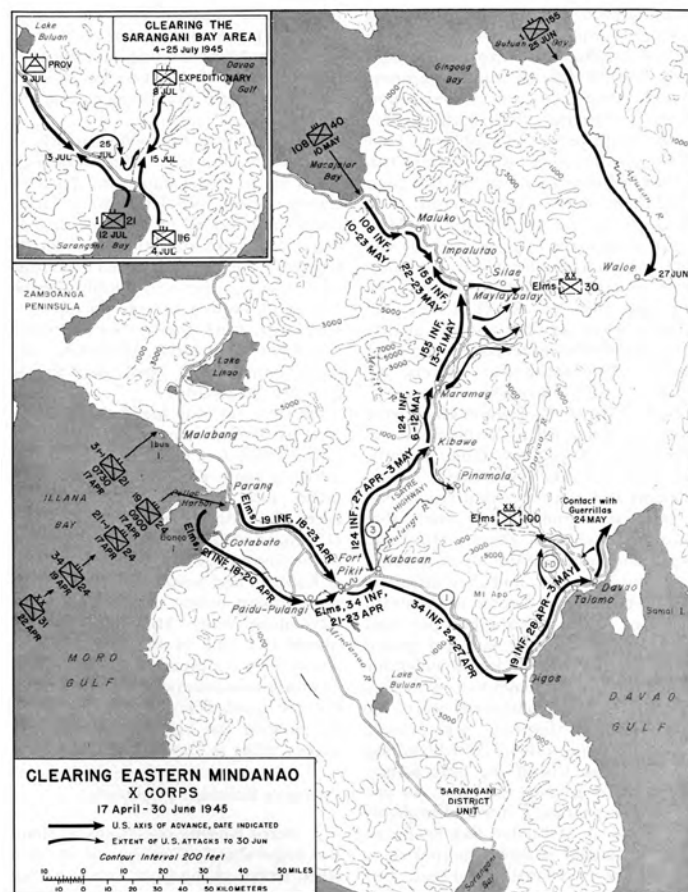
<sup>75</sup> Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 98.

<sup>76</sup> Balis, "American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance," 91-92.

<sup>77</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 592.; Hogan, *Special Operations in World War II*, 90.

<sup>78</sup> *History of X Corps on Mindanao*, 8.

again enabled the second wave of US troops in Operation Victor V to land unopposed at Malabang, Parang, and Cotabato on April 17, 1945. Guerrilla assistance allowed X Corps to maintain a high tempo, which prevented the Japanese from conducting delaying attacks or preparing defenses as US forces pushed towards Davao.<sup>79</sup> By June 25, 1945, Japanese forces were unable to conduct organized actions, prompting Eichelberger to declare the operations in Mindanao complete on June 30.



MAP 32

Figure 3. Clearing Eastern Mindanao. Robert Ross Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 624.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 61-64; Balis, "American Influence on the Mindanao Resistance," 94-104; Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 621.

Within the guerrilla movement on Mindanao, there was an evolution of increasing command and control. At the outset, there was none at all. Fertig's consolidation of control on the island provided the framework that SWPA tapped into to exert higher order control. Having a sufficient number of Americans to perform command and staff functions at the district, corps, and division levels enhanced these efforts. Reliable communications via radio and face-to-face couriers, such as Parsons, were critical requirements to the success of guerrilla efforts on Mindanao. That Fertig disobeyed guidance to avoid engagements was understandable. The Army had not trained Fertig in guerrilla warfare, nor had the Army trained the staff at SWPA headquarters for that matter. Further, he acted within the constraints of the situation and culture in which he was working. Lt. Col. Frank McGee, commander of Fertig's 106th Division in Cotabato Province observed, "Most of the Filipino leaders are active and aggressive to a fault. It is difficult to keep them from exceeding authority, encroaching on the domain of others and to make them serve under others."<sup>80</sup> To enact a complete ban on guerrilla operations against the Japanese would have caused tension within this cultural context and might have provoked a mutiny. Perhaps more importantly, detailed control was not essential during this guerrilla warfare phase. The command hierarchy and communications plan in place was sufficient to achieve the primary mission of supplying intelligence to SWPA. However, SWPA likely did not have the time, interest, or ability to direct small unit tactical operations necessary to both disrupting the Japanese occupation and encouraging popular morale.

The Mindanao guerrillas also transitioned rather seamlessly to being under the direct control of Eighth Army and X Corps in the mobile warfare phase. The broader mission-orders approach that worked well in the guerrilla phase would have been completely inappropriate due to the coordination required in this phase for simultaneous and sequential operations. Applying less detailed control might have resulted in either the failure to synchronize actions or fratricide between the guerrillas and US forces. Most importantly, the guerrilla movement on Mindanao had two key

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<sup>80</sup> Schmidt, "American Involvement in the Filipino Resistance," 204.

strategic effects. First, the intelligence provided by the coast-watcher operations greatly enhanced the ability of the US Navy to inflict severe damage on the Japanese fleet through US submarine attacks on Japanese naval lines of communication. Coast watchers also provided critical intelligence on enemy ship movements that facilitated decisive naval victories at the Battles of the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf. Second, the guerrillas' ability to disrupt Japanese garrisons on Mindanao allowed SWPA to bypass Mindanao and conduct Allied landings farther north on Leyte. This enhanced the tempo of SWPA operations to retake the Philippines. When US Army forces finally landed on Mindanao, guerrilla assistance allowed unopposed landings that were critical in reducing risk and maintaining the initiative to retake the island. In sum, guerrilla operations on Mindanao enhanced flexibility and mitigated risk, and thus contributed greatly to the success of SWPA in defeating the Japanese in the Philippines.

## Luzon Guerrillas

The seventeenth-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes described the State of Nature as a realm where life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." In 1942, life in central Luzon fit that description closely save only for "solitary." It was not solitary at all. Luzon was inhabited by numerous Filipino farmers and their families, Japanese occupation troops, American and Filipino escapees of Bataan, Corregidor, and elsewhere, Allied soldiers who never surrendered, aspiring guerrillas, Communist guerrillas, and mere roving gangs of outlaws.

—Robert Lapham and Bernard Norling in *Lapham's Raiders*

Luzon is the largest and most populous island in the Philippines. Though Luzon has less jungle terrain than Mindanao, it shares the same volcanic mountain features. Along the northwest coast are the Cordillera Central Mountains. On the northeast coast are the narrower Sierra Madres. Between these two ranges are the Cagayan Valley to the north and the Caraballo Mountains to the south. South of the Caraballo and Cordillera Central Mountains is the Central Luzon plain bounded on the east by the Sierra Madres and to the west by the Zambales Mountains stretching from Lingayen Gulf to the Bataan Peninsula. The central plain has the most maneuver space for large formations. Lingayen Gulf provides the best area for amphibious assault due to its access to rail and

road networks leading to the capital of Manila at the southeast of the central plain.<sup>81</sup> South of Manila is the Batangas Peninsula, with the Bicol Peninsula branching off to the southeast. Most guerrillas on Luzon found sanctuary in the mountain ranges, though some operated in the Central Luzon plain. However, the main distinction between Luzon and the other islands during World War II was the heavier occupation by Japanese forces and a greater number of improved roads that aided Japanese movements.<sup>82</sup>



Figure 4. Northern Philippine Provinces. David W. Hogan, *US Army Special Operations in World War II* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1992), 66.

<sup>81</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 19.

<sup>82</sup> MacArthur, *Reports*, vol. 1, 318; Lapham, *Lapham's Raiders*, 95.

The Japanese invasion of Luzon commenced with advance landings on December 10, 1941, at Aparri on the north coast, Vigan on the west coast, and later at Legaspi on the Bicol Peninsula. These footholds allowed Japan to seize airfields that supported the main landings at Lingayen Gulf and Lamon Bay from December 22-24. On January 2, 1942, as the two forces converged and entered Manila, Japanese commander General Homma ordered an assault on Bataan to destroy the retreating Allied forces. After months of hard fighting and with US forces pushed back to the southern tip of the Bataan Peninsula, MacArthur ordered Wainwright on April 4 to attempt a breakout that might allow the forces to resupply or fight on as guerrillas. However, Wainwright did not implement the order due to the exhaustion of his troops.<sup>83</sup> Bataan fell on April 11, and US Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFEF) headquarters on Corregidor surrendered soon after on May 8. Nevertheless, small groups of Americans were able to cross enemy lines at Bataan and evade north into the mountains. Other Allied troops outside of the Bataan zone were similarly able to seek sanctuary in the mountains or among the Filipino populace.

Whereas the guerrilla situation on Mindanao progressed generally from chaos to control, the situation on Luzon took a different trajectory. Broadly, the command and control situation on Luzon progressed from control, to disorder, then back to control. Since there were more American and Filipino forces on Luzon, there were initially more American officers of higher rank who attempted to consolidate the guerrilla groups. With instructions from MacArthur to initiate guerrilla activities, Col. Claude A. Thorp evaded from Bataan and established a headquarters in the central Zambales Mountains from which he maintained some degree of command and control until the Japanese captured him in October 1942.<sup>84</sup> Following Thorp's capture, command and control dispersed among American junior officers. Three of these who survived the war were Robert

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<sup>83</sup> Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, 452.

<sup>84</sup> MacArthur, *Reports*, vol. 1, 318.

Lapham, Edwin Ramsey, and Bernard Anderson. Col. Gyles Merrill tried to regain control over the Central Luzon groups formerly led by Thorp, but was unable to do so from his remote base in the Zambales Mountains.<sup>85</sup>

Similarly, Col. Hugh Straughan established the Fil-American Irregular Troops (FAIT) and consolidated control of some groups operating around Manila in 1942. Straughan designated himself as the “Supreme Commander of the South Central Luzon Guerrillas,” but he was betrayed and captured by the Japanese in August 1943. However, no junior American officers appear to have assumed command and control in this case. Straughan’s organization broke into four Filipino guerrilla organizations consisting of the Marking guerrillas, the FAIT, the Hunters ROTC, and President Quezon’s Own Guerrillas.<sup>86</sup> Lapham describes the relationship between the Hunters and Markings as the fiercest feud on Luzon.<sup>87</sup> It might be impossible to know whether unity of command could have prevented this enmity, but the absence of unity certainly did not help.

In Northern Luzon, the situation unfolded in much the same way as it did elsewhere on the island. The main difference being that there was greater, though minimal, radio contact with higher headquarters. From the Caraballo Mountain region, Capt. Everett Warner contacted US headquarters on Corregidor in January 1942. Warner surrendered to the Japanese but passed on his radio to Filipino Col. Guillermo Nakar, who commanded the remnants of a Philippine Army infantry battalion. Nakar maintained radio contact with SWPA from June to September 1942. The Japanese captured Nakar and his radio, but American Lt. Cols. Arthur Noble and Martin Moses attempted to gain control over the Northern Luzon guerrillas. Noble and Moses used a radio that Capt. Ralph Praeger had salvaged, but these three American officers were captured in June and August 1943. Maj. Russell Volckmann finally brought some measure of cohesion in command and

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<sup>85</sup> Military Intelligence Section, *Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines*, 9-10.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 9, 18-19.

<sup>87</sup> Lapham, *Lapham’s Raiders*, 108.



control when he established the US Forces in the Philippines, North Luzon (USAFIP-NL) in early 1944.<sup>88</sup>

The guerrilla groups on Luzon never unified completely for a number of reasons. First, communication among groups was difficult. For example, guerrilla elements commanded by Lapham, Volckmann, and Anderson did not have radio communication with each other until July 1944.<sup>89</sup> Prior to radio contact, the groups used couriers to attempt to communicate internally, between groups, and with SWPA. Courier communications were slow, preventing any effective cooperation or synchronization of efforts. Guerrilla commanders could never be certain that a message got through, and couriers were at risk of capture or being co-opted to spy for the Japanese.<sup>90</sup>

Second, there was conflict and competition among guerrilla groups. Lapham recalls, “Early in the war, disputes within and between guerrilla groups had been mainly over what our duties were and what our policies should be, much complicated by rivalry for access to food and arms, all exacerbated by personal grudges. By 1944 we were quarreling mostly over jurisdiction: who should rule whom.”<sup>91</sup> Many of the American commanders saw themselves as the rightful supreme commander of the Luzon guerrillas. Straughan, Ramsey, Anderson, and Volckmann each tried to claim this title at various points. It is unclear if such proclamations had any significant results beyond prompting the Japanese to place a higher price on their heads. Other commanders like Lapham ignored such assertions and operated autonomously in other sectors.

In December 1944, SWPA sent a memorandum to American commanders telling them to stop quarrelling. SWPA followed this message with another announcement stating that MacArthur

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 140; Whitney, *MacArthur*, 128-30.; Military Intelligence Section, *The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines*, 40-41; MacArthur, *Reports*, 320; Guardia, *Shadow Commander*, 89.

<sup>89</sup> Lapham, *Lapham's Raiders*, 148.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 113, 142.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 121.

did not want an overall guerrilla commander on Luzon.<sup>92</sup> Several circumstances support this decision. The higher Japanese presence on Luzon rendered the environment hostile and more dangerous for the infiltration of AIB personnel. Thus, to infiltrate a senior American officer on Luzon to validate a guerrilla commander, as Parsons had done on Mindanao, would have been less feasible given the time needed not only to travel to Luzon by submarine but also to visit the various claimants dispersed throughout the island. Second, the invasion of Leyte in October 1944 fully engaged SWPA with ongoing operations, and naming a guerrilla commander probably seemed a task that would soon be overcome by events when conventional forces reached Luzon.

Third, there was no US Army guerrilla warfare doctrine, and none of these American commanders had any training in it. The 1940 US Marine Corps *Small Wars Manual* does address guerrilla warfare, though mostly from the perspective of how regular forces should counter it. The same perspective is found in the 1945 Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, pamphlet *Combatting the Guerrilla*, though this document came too late to be of use. In fact, Volckmann would later be the first to include the subject in Army doctrine in 1950 when he wrote FM 31-21, *Organization and Conduct of Guerrilla Warfare*.<sup>93</sup> As noted by Lapham above, this lack of doctrine exacerbated tensions between American officers. None had a reference or template to use as a common starting point for establishing command and control of guerrilla forces beyond that of a typical infantry unit structure. This led junior officers to question the capability and competence of senior officers. Capt. Donald Blackburn, a sub-commander in Volckmann's USAFIP-NL and later commander of the Studies and Observation Group in Vietnam who rose to the rank of brigadier general, met with Colonel Thorp after escaping from Bataan with Volckmann. Blackburn found Thorp to be unfit for the task of commanding the Luzon guerrillas due to a condescending and uncompromising approach that alienated American soldiers and the Filipino

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>93</sup> Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 8.

populace.<sup>94</sup> As a result, Volckmann and Blackburn moved north and integrated under the command of Moses and Noble until those officers were captured. Volckmann recalls:

In all my training I had never been exposed to the techniques and policies of resistance and guerrilla warfare...I had the opportunity to watch and analyze what [Moses and Noble] did and what they failed to do. More important still, I carefully observed the reactions of subordinate commanders, their men, and the natives. In no way do I mean to be critical of my superiors, for I am sure they had the same background, or rather lack of background, in the field as I did. We all had to learn the hard way.<sup>95</sup>

Despite these challenges to establishing a cohesive and unified guerrilla command structure, some important command measures from SWPA did get through. In April 1943, Volckmann and Blackburn received notification through the courier system that Moses and Noble made contact with SWPA using Praeger's radio. Volckmann remembers SWPA providing the following mission orders:

General policy of USAFIP in the Philippines is to limit hostilities and contact with the enemy to the minimum amount necessary for safety. Concentrate on perfecting organization and on developing of intelligence net. Therefore, until ammunition and supplies can be sent, your present mission as intelligence units can be currently of utmost value. Nothing is surer than our ultimate victory. Signed MacArthur.<sup>96</sup>

Blackburn's diary records slightly different wording and suggests that this is what the USAFIP-NL guerrillas were already doing.<sup>97</sup> This "lay low" order reflected SWPA's lack of situational awareness about the guerrilla movement. It also fit with Willoughby's priorities as the SWPA G-2 and his bias that, if the guerrillas had any value at all, it was in providing information. However, SWPA's logic was both sound and prudent because without organization the guerrillas would never be able to coordinate tactical actions with other elements. More importantly, the guerrillas lacked the combat power to confront the Japanese as a regular formation in conventional battles. Lapham

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<sup>94</sup> Guardia, *Shadow Commander*, 60.

<sup>95</sup> Volckmann, *We Remained*, 105.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>97</sup> Guardia, *Shadow Commander*, 86.

suggests that all of the guerrilla bands combined would not have fielded enough combat power to challenge the Japanese.<sup>98</sup>

A prominent control measure was SWPA's use of the existing Philippine military district boundaries. SWPA first applied this framework in the 10th Military District on Mindanao in February 1943, and progressed to the north as AIB gained access to the groups on other islands.<sup>99</sup> However, this concept was not effective on Luzon as evidenced by SWPA's disclaimer in Figure 5 that, "Luzon guerrillas were not recognized on the basis of area controlled." Had Thorp survived this issue might have been moot since he originally divided Luzon into four sectors: north, south, east, and west. "North" included everything north of Pangasinan and Nueva Ecija. "South" was everything south of Manila. "East" ran from Lingayen Gulf to Manila, and "West" was the Zambales area.<sup>100</sup>

Receiving radios in 1944 had the de facto effect of briefly making Volckmann commander of 1st District and Lapham the commander of the 2nd District, but flaws of this control model were apparent in other sectors. SWPA drew the districts based on terrain and population density prior to the war. Yet, arbitrary geographical boundaries have limited utility in guerrilla warfare because the guerrilla often does not control, nor seek to control, terrain. The guerrilla must remain mobile to survive. The boundaries of 4th District were not useful during Japanese occupation because no guerrilla commander could reasonably be expected to command and control from Manila to the outlying islands of Mindoro and Palawan. The nexus of 3rd, 4th, and 5th Districts in the vicinity of Manila was also problematic. The strategic significance and high population of the capital suggests that this area, more than any other, should have had a boundary that did not create operational seams near such a major objective. SWPA could have devised a more effective system of

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<sup>98</sup> Lapham, *Lapham's Raiders*, 113.

<sup>99</sup> MacArthur, *Reports*, vol. 1, 302.

<sup>100</sup> Edwin Ramsey, "Brief History, East Central Luzon Guerrilla Area, 23 October 1946" in *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines during the Japanese Occupation: Documentary Appendices*, vol. 2, Military Intelligence Section (Tokyo: US Army Forces, Pacific, 1948), 1.

boundaries for Luzon. SWPA might have achieved this by adapting the antiquated military district template to one based on the location and spheres of control of the guerrilla forces in conjunction with the disposition of Japanese forces and the anticipated boundaries of Allied corps for the assault on Luzon. However, such an assessment can be made only in retrospect. At the time, SWPA had no precedent, doctrine, or information with which to work.

SWPA also enhanced control over the guerrilla movement by modifying the staff structure and responsibilities for specific aspects of guerrilla support. In a February 1944 staff study for Sutherland, Willoughby described guerrilla activity on Luzon as negligible and as yet unorganized. He assessed, "It will be impossible to organize a combat unit in Luzon. Intelligence activities only are carried on there."<sup>101</sup> Willoughby concluded the memorandum with recommendations to assign definite responsibilities to the general staff for the tasks currently handled by the PRS under Whitney. He argued that the smaller PRS was no longer suited to handle the growing responsibilities.<sup>102</sup> Sutherland implemented a modification of these recommendations in May 1944, "assigning intelligence tasks to G-2, supply to G-4, and direction of guerrillas to the G-3 Operations subsection; but instead of assigning Whitney to G-2 as Willoughby had hoped, he detailed the bulk of the PRS and its chief to G-3 Operations."<sup>103</sup> Willoughby offered Sutherland another important insight with his recommendation: "To take advantage of the assistance which the organized forces in the PI can give us, our key personnel must be sent in at least 6 months prior to our attack. Planning must start at least nine months prior to attack day."<sup>104</sup> In a few months, Willoughby's recommendation was realized.

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<sup>101</sup> The fact that USAFIP-NL later operated in a division-sized formation supported by attached US Army artillery units challenges accuracy of this prediction; however, the time range of Willoughby's forecast is unclear.

<sup>102</sup> C. A. Willoughby, "G-2 Staff Study of Philippine Islands Situation, 25 February 1944," in *Intelligence Activities in the Philippines during the Japanese Occupation: Documentary Appendices*, vol. 2, Military Intelligence Section (Tokyo: US Army Forces, Pacific, 1948), 2, 12.

<sup>103</sup> Hogan, "MacArthur, Stilwell," 108.

<sup>104</sup> Willoughby, "Study of Philippine Islands Situation," 12.



Figure 5. Military Districts, 1943-1945. Douglas MacArthur, *Reports of General MacArthur*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1994), 303.

In May 1944, Capt. Robert Ball landed on the east coast of Luzon and provided a radio to Lapham. Anderson received a radio in June, and Volckmann got one in August.<sup>105</sup> Despite having improvised radio sets capable of providing intermittent communications among groups, this was the first time in over a year that any of the groups had direct communications with SWPA. Soon after, SWPA attempted to make up for lost time and fill the many intelligence gaps regarding Luzon. Lapham recalls, “SWPA was relentless with its orders, urging, and reminders to be indefatigable in collecting every conceivable sort of information about whatever might facilitate or hinder an invasion. The information itself was specified in excruciating detail.”<sup>106</sup> Direct communications also allowed SWPA to increase supply deliveries by submarine and air drop. Though Ball’s radio delivery was instrumental in improving SWPA control in Luzon, his arrival did not unify the command structure of the Luzon guerrillas. Ball lacked the authority that MacArthur had granted to Parsons in the southern islands to recognize an official guerrilla commander.

However, the arrival of radios and supplies did allow guerrillas to increase sabotage and subversion. Historian Mike Guardia categorizes the period from mid-1943 to January 1945 as the first phase of USAFIP-NL combat operations, during which Volckmann targeted Japanese sustainment resources and lines of communication. Guardia assesses that this approach had the effect of drawing Japanese attention away from coastal defenses and reducing the means available to the Japanese for repelling an invasion.<sup>107</sup> Intelligence operations continued as the primary effort in parallel to increased tactical actions. By October 1944, guerrillas were providing SWPA with abundant information that assisted the planning of the invasion.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Military Intelligence Section, *Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines*, vol. 1, 44; Lapham, *Lapham’s Raiders*, 144-148; Volckmann, *We Remained*, 157; Hogan, *Special Operations in World War II*, 80.

<sup>106</sup> Lapham, *Lapham’s Raiders*, 163.

<sup>107</sup> Guardia, *American Guerilla*, 129-30.

<sup>108</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 26-27.

On January 5, 1945, SWPA instructed guerrilla leaders to sabotage lines of communication, supplies, aircraft, and generally “unleash maximum violence against the enemy.”<sup>109</sup> SWPA ordered Sixth Army to assume control of guerrillas and direct guerrilla operations.<sup>110</sup> On January 8, Volckmann notified MacArthur that there would be no Japanese opposition at Lingayen Gulf.<sup>111</sup> Regardless, the III Amphibious Assault Force shelled the beaches for good measure. When the XIV Corps and Sixth Army came ashore on January 9, friendly Filipinos, not Japanese, greeted American troops.<sup>112</sup> On January 13, 1945, Gen. Walter Krueger, Sixth Army commander, assumed control of all American and Filipino forces on Luzon.<sup>113</sup> Soon after, Volckmann, Lapham, and Anderson each met with Krueger to brief him on the situation.

While the delay due to shelling is minor in terms of an operation of this size, it does indicate an obstacle that would continue as guerrillas integrated with conventional units. Allied commanders were often dubious of guerrilla intelligence and exercised caution in acting upon that information. American units found the guerrillas to be accurate in some respects, such as identifying enemy locations, but lacking in others. The most frequently cited deficiency was the guerrilla tendency to overestimate or exaggerate enemy troop numbers.<sup>114</sup> Allied forces used aerial reconnaissance to verify guerrilla reports, but this was not always possible. Yet, in many cases, these guerrilla reports were the only information available.<sup>115</sup>

Sixth Army did act with confidence on the information Lapham provided to Krueger about American prisoners of war held near Cabanatuan. Hogan assesses, “The attack marked the

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<sup>109</sup> Volckmann, *We Remained*, 180; Ramsey, *Ramsey’s War*, 301.

<sup>110</sup> Sixth Army, “Report of the Luzon Campaign,” 5; Lapham, *Lapham’s Raiders*, 172.

<sup>111</sup> Volckmann, *We Remained*, 181.

<sup>112</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 77.

<sup>113</sup> Sixth Army, “Report of the Luzon Campaign,” 81.

<sup>114</sup> Headquarters, 38th Infantry Division, “Historical Report M-7 Operation,” 142; XIV Corps, “After Action Report,” 54.

<sup>115</sup> Headquarters, 38th Infantry Division, “Historical Report M-7 Operation,” 115.



highpoint of cooperation between [6th] Rangers, guerrillas, Alamo Scouts, and conventional American combat units.”<sup>116</sup> From January 28-31, this coalition task force infiltrated, destroyed all Japanese prison guards, and liberated 512 American captives.<sup>117</sup>

Guerrilla control over much of the northwest coast of Luzon allowed SWPA to redirect XI Corps from landing at Vigan on January 11, to instead land in Zambales on January 29. SWPA tasked XI Corps to capture nearby airfields and be rapidly prepared to deny a Japanese retreat to Bataan in the event that the 1942 Japanese invasion replayed with roles reversed.<sup>118</sup> By February 16, XI Corps had cleared Bataan, a significant phase in opening Manila Bay.<sup>119</sup>

Although the guerrillas provided intelligence indicating the landings at Lingayen would be uncontested and conducted some harassing attacks on Japanese garrisons and outposts, they cannot take full credit for allowing unopposed landings. This is more attributable to General Yamashita, overall commander of the Japanese defense, and his strategy to conduct static defenses in the mountainous regions in the Cordillera Central near Baguio and Bontoc in an effort to delay the Allied advance. Multiple dilemmas drove Yamashita to this approach. Indeed, Yamashita faced a guerrilla threat that could strike his forces but that the Japanese could not eradicate.<sup>120</sup> More pressing, his forces lacked artillery, armor, and the basic supplies needed to meet an invasion. In addition, Allied air and submarine attacks denied much of the needed reinforcements and provisions.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Hogan, *Special Operations in World War II*, 86.

<sup>117</sup> Sixth Army, “Report of the Luzon Campaign,” 30-31; Lapham, *Lapham’s Raiders*, 176-182. See also Hampton Sides, *Ghost Soldiers: The Epic Account of World War II’s Greatest Rescue Mission* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002); and William B. Breuer, *The Great Raid on Cabanatuan: Rescuing the Doomed Ghosts of Bataan and Corregidor* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1994).

<sup>118</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 310-11; Sixth Army, “Report of the Luzon Campaign,” 30.

<sup>119</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 335.

<sup>120</sup> Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 132-33.

<sup>121</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 90; Andrade, *Luzon*, 7.

The exception to this strategy was the city of Manila, where confusion about Yamashita's orders combined with a lack of coordination between the Japanese army and navy left the city much more heavily defended than Yamashita intended.<sup>122</sup> As Sixth Army drove toward Manila, the effects of guerrilla activities became apparent. Guerrilla sabotage of bridges slowed the tempo of movement for both the Allies and the Japanese.<sup>123</sup> However, guerrillas also secured towns ahead of the Allied advance and conducted rear area security, decreasing risk and increasing operational reach and tempo.<sup>124</sup> In the battle for Manila from February 3 to March 3, guerrillas provided assistance and guides to American units.<sup>125</sup> While securing the capital, SWPA also set out to seal off Japanese escape routes. On February 24, guerrillas again aided an American task force in liberating the prison camp at Los Banos southwest of Manila.<sup>126</sup>

While US forces battled the Shimbu group around Manila and the Kembu group, from Clark Field to Bataan, Sixth Army armed and trained Volckmann's USAFIP-NL guerrillas for the fight against the Shobu group in the north. From January to February, the force grew from 8,000 to 18,000 guerrillas and would eventually consist of five infantry regiments, two artillery battalions, engineers, and organic medical support.<sup>127</sup> As of February, Lapham estimated that his Luzon Guerrilla Armed Forces (LGAF) had 10,000 to 12,000 active guerrillas. One of the two LGAF regiments attached to the 32nd Division for the push through Cordillera Central area.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 240-48.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 91, 100-1, 128, 171, 334; Lapham, *Lapham's Raiders*, 183; Headquarters 38th Infantry Division, "Historical Report M-7 Operation," 31, 117.

<sup>124</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 164, 168, 180, 201, 218.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 220, 264.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 428; Sixth Army, "Report of the Luzon Campaign," 41.

<sup>127</sup> Sixth Army, "Report of the Luzon Campaign," 80-81.

<sup>128</sup> Lapham, *Lapham's Raiders*, 185.

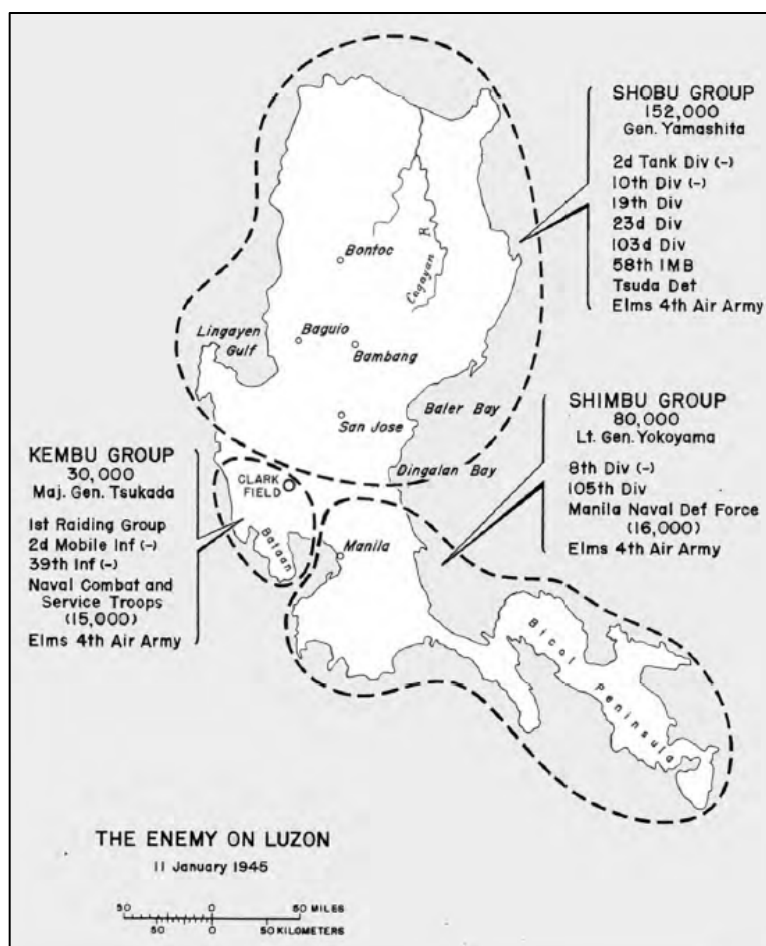


Figure 6. Disposition of Japanese Forces on Luzon. Robert Ross Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 95.

Simultaneously, Volckmann had ordered his guerrillas to conduct regimental operations in their respective districts. Guardia calls this the second phase of USAFIP-NL operations from January to August 1945. During this phase, USAFIP-NL began disrupting the Japanese in North Luzon and reducing the Yamashita pocket. Sixth Army reports note:

Philippine Guerrilla Forces, North Luzon, carried out these missions so successfully that by 5 March 1945, they controlled all of the north coast of Luzon west of the mouth of the Cagayan River, and the west coast of Luzon... south to San Fernando. Their operations ... forced the enemy to restrict his activities..., which accomplished practically nothing. [Guerrilla operations and pressure from the 33rd Division] forced the enemy to [withdraw] to shorten lines.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Sixth Army, "Report of the Luzon Campaign," 82.

Guardia describes the third phase of USAFIP-NL operations as overlapping the second. During this final phase, three regiments fought as a Division-sized formation with US Army artillery attached.<sup>130</sup> Decisive engagements in this phase included the opening the Bessang Pass in June, which allowed Allied forces to encircle Yamashita's headquarters, and the destruction of the Japanese garrison at Lepanto-Mankayan to collapse the Japanese left flank on July 20.<sup>131</sup>

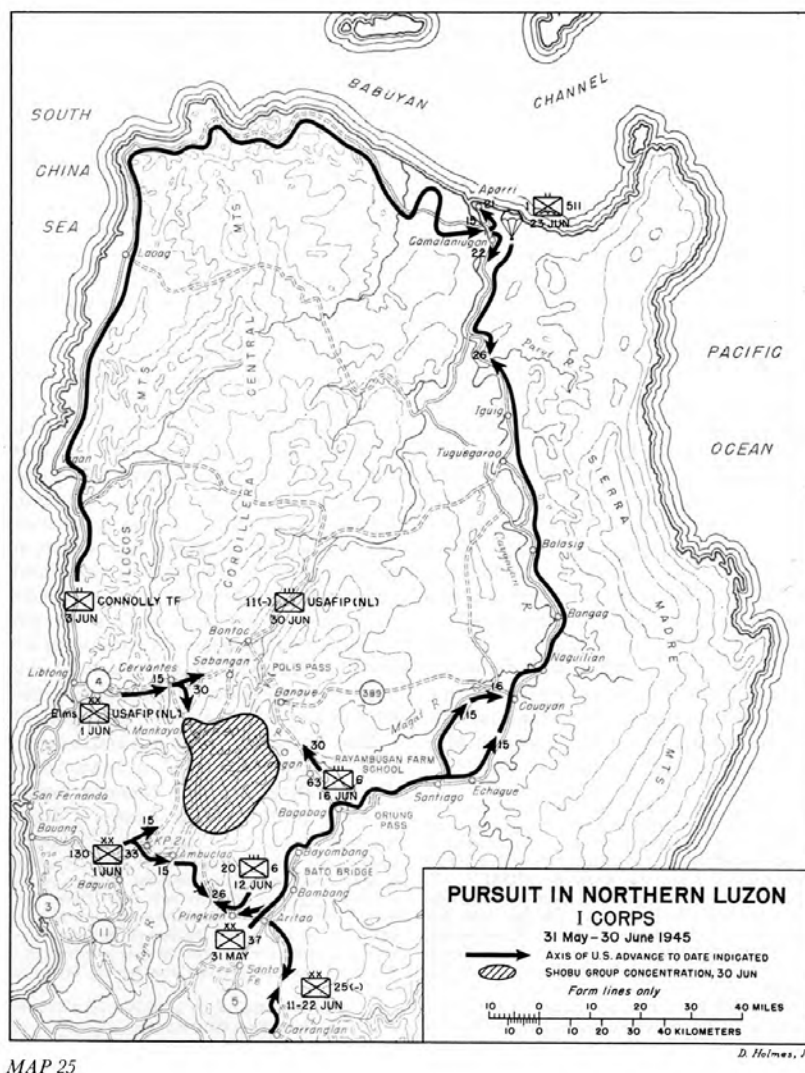


Figure 7. Pursuit in Northern Luzon. Robert Ross Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 565.

<sup>130</sup> Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 129-46; I Corps, *History of the Luzon Campaign*, 301.

<sup>131</sup> Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 134-46; Volckmann, *We Remained*, 208-16; Sixth Army, "Report of the Luzon Campaign," 87.

As the US dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese mainland on August 6 and 9, the LGAF and the USAFIP-NL “Division” were attacking as part of the constricting encirclement around Yamashita’s headquarters near Bontoc. Andrade observes that the Allies had strategically defeated the Japanese on Luzon by the end of March.<sup>132</sup> However, such an assessment would have been little consolation to the soldiers and guerrillas still in the fight. Sixth and Eighth Army estimates assumed that no more than 23,000 Japanese remained on Luzon. Yet, historian Robert Ross Smith estimates that the actual number was closer to 65,000.<sup>133</sup> Smith points out that Eighth Army, supported by some 43,000 guerrillas on Luzon, was still engaged in mopping up activities until Japan accepted the cease-fire on August 15.<sup>134</sup> Operational control of the guerrillas passed from SWPA to Sixth Army on January 13, 1945; from Sixth Army to I Corps on June 1; from I Corps to XIV Corps on June 30; and finally to Eighth Army on July 1.<sup>135</sup> Across these transitions, USAFIP-NL guerrillas engaged in 218 days of continuous combat. Yamashita finally surrendered to Volckmann following the formal Japanese capitulation on September 1.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Andrade, *Luzon*, 29.

<sup>133</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 573.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 651.

<sup>135</sup> Sixth Army, “Report of the Luzon Campaign,” 97-98, 115, 165; I Corps, *History of the Luzon Campaign*, 123.

<sup>136</sup> Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 146; Volckmann, *We Remained*, 216-17.

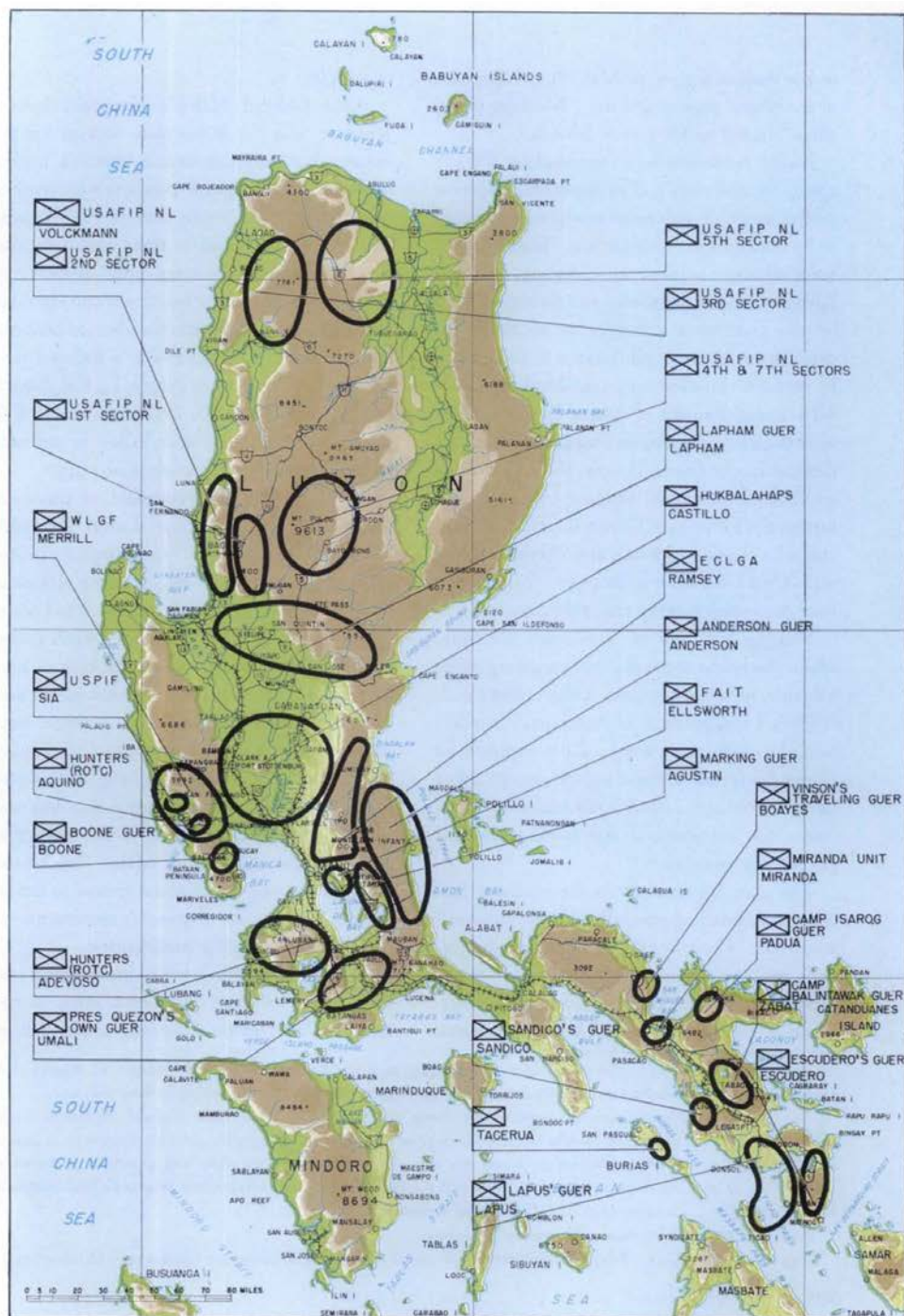


PLATE NO. 91  
Guerrilla Forces on Luzon, October—November 1944

Figure 8. Guerrilla Forces on Luzon, October-November 1944. Douglas MacArthur, *Reports of General MacArthur*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1994), 319.

## Conclusion

This study began with an interest in knowing more about the guerrilla campaigns in the Philippines. This curiosity stemmed from examining this case study of guerrilla warfare as a means of better understanding not only its history but also the present doctrine and the potential future employment of unconventional warfare. The perspective of command and control came from an USASOC research topic focused on command and control expectations in an unconventional warfare environment. Rather than starting from assumptions or a conclusion and trying to fit evidence to it, this examination sought to start with the evidence available and come to a larger theory or generalization about command and control in guerrilla warfare or unconventional warfare.

While there are several examples of command and control in this case, there is no direct discussion of it in primary or secondary sources. This might be because “command and control” was not a doctrinal concept at the time in the way that it was later used, and thus was of little interest to those officers writing the primary sources or those historians writing from them. Current Army doctrine replaces “command and control” with “mission command,” which seems more aligned with the leadership style that SWPA practiced in this case. Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*, defines mission command philosophy as:

[T]he exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent... that emphasizes broad mission-type orders, individual initiative within the commander’s intent, and leaders who can anticipate and adapt quickly to changing conditions.<sup>137</sup>

The directives given by SWPA were certainly broad. This required that guerrilla commanders exercise initiative, though in some cases this went against stated commander’s intent. However, as Fertig’s use of heavy weapons showed, tactical commanders in guerrilla or unconventional warfare are likely to have to go against higher guidance in order to survive. Guerrilla warfare is a realm of dilemmas. If Fertig did not deploy the heavy weapons, he and his command might not have

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<sup>137</sup> Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 6.

survived to use them at the approved time and place. This phenomenon is particularly true in the first and second phases in a Maoist model.<sup>138</sup>

By necessity, those American guerrilla commanders who thrived in this environment adapted quickly to changing conditions.<sup>139</sup> The most evident example of this is the transition of the Luzon guerrillas from the guerrilla phase to the mobile warfare phase. Smith observes:

The record suggests that in many respects the Japanese and the guerrillas may have adapted themselves more effectively than the Sixth and Eighth Armies to the conditions of ground warfare obtaining throughout most of the Philippine archipelago. Such a comparison raises questions that do not necessarily concern leadership or command, but rather involve the training and generally ponderous organization of the mechanized forces that the [US] put into the field.<sup>140</sup>

The histories of guerrilla warfare on Mindanao and Luzon during World War II offer several points of comparison and contrast. In both cases, reliable communications were a prerequisite for SWPA to exercise command and control. Fertig achieved this much earlier on Mindanao in February 1943 where communications remained relatively uninterrupted throughout the conflict. On Luzon, initial communications with SWPA were limited to sporadic connectivity with isolated guerrilla groups from December 1942 to August 1943. Thereafter, there was no radio contact with Luzon guerrillas until the middle of 1944.

In both locations, the most successful American guerrilla leaders organized their elements on the hierarchical model of US Army unit structure as opposed to a more nodal or cellular configuration.<sup>141</sup> On Mindanao, the buildup of forces followed a linear path from disorder to organization, culminating in corps-sized formations. Fertig had the benefit of receiving supplies

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<sup>138</sup> Samuel B. Griffith, trans., *Mao Tse-Tung On Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Praeger, 1961), 20-21, 27.

<sup>139</sup> Hogan points out that Volckmann classified unsundered Americans in three categories: "some gave up hope and merely waited to die; a few resorted to stealing, cheating, and even murder to survive; others seemed to flourish, gaining in strength and determination with each successive challenge." Hogan, *Special Operations in World War II*, 67.

<sup>140</sup> Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 654.

<sup>141</sup> Holmes, *Wendell Fertig*, 79-84; Volckmann, *We Remained*, 124; Guardia, *American Guerrilla*, 101-3.



much earlier in the war. This provided him with a bargaining chip to consolidate the movement. The provision of supplies also gave SWPA leverage to exert control over Fertig, which was further enhanced by the face-to-face meetings between Fertig and Parsons. During the Allied invasion of Mindanao, regular Allied forces exerted less control over the guerrillas. Instead, guerrillas operated in a parallel structure to provide information and security to the main effort.

Luzon guerrillas did not have the benefit of resupply until late in the war and had to resort to battlefield recovery of enemy supplies even after the invasion. The higher Japanese presence on Luzon resulted in the capture and disruption of guerrilla leaders as leaders tried to organize into conventionally structured formations. Combined with the lack of communications and supplies from external support, this Japanese pressure caused many of the guerrillas on Luzon to prioritize survival and evasion over organization and buildup. Though control from SWPA was low or non-existent in the organization and buildup phases on Luzon, the transition to integrated operations with US Army invasion forces went relatively smoothly. The employment of guerrillas on Luzon reached its organizational peak with USAFIP-NL operating as a supported division. In sum, the Luzon situation shifted from low organization to disorganization before swinging back to a high-level of organization.

The themes and trends that emerge from this study are that information predominantly flowed up, supplies flowed down, and coordination was most critical at transition points. Information provided by guerrillas was important for the development of theater intelligence, but not for the direction by SWPA of local actions by guerrillas. Supplies are necessary for the guerrillas' survival in earlier phases and for their success in later phases. The main transition points are shifts from organization to buildup, buildup to employment, and employment to integration with conventional forces. While coordinating instructions or orders from higher commands are critical in the latter, they are more supplementary in the first two. Orders from SWPA, often coming from MacArthur himself, were short and to the point. Whether this was due to a brusque personal style,

use of mission command philosophy, a limitation of technology available, or brevity as the result of multiple ongoing concerns, it was effective because it allowed American guerrilla commanders the flexibility and initiative to adapt guidance and intent to the local situation.

Recent US Army experience has centered on conducting counterinsurgency operations. In this environment, many commanders and future commanders have experienced and come to expect instant and continuous communications systems capable of transmitting vast amounts of data. This has resulted in the expectation of a more direct command and control relationship. While Army doctrine has tried to look to the future and mitigate micromanagement through doctrinal updates such as mission command philosophy, some habits of experience are hard to break.

It is not unthinkable that American soldiers might again find themselves in a truly non-permissive unconventional warfare scenario that is a subset of a larger conflict. In fact, given rising tensions in Pacific Command, it is possible that the Philippines could again be the area of operations. In the final thoughts of his autobiographical account, Volckmann predicts:

A future war waged with highly mobile forces, supported by scientific and mechanical means of tremendous destructive potential, will lead to a greater dispersion of forces, fluid battlefronts and widespread isolated actions—a setting ideal for guerrilla warfare...Guerrilla warfare will not only continue but will play an increasingly important role in modern warfare.<sup>142</sup>

In such a scenario, a near-peer adversary might be capable of countering American technological advantages of communications. Even if the adversary lacks this capability, American soldiers isolated in the region might not have all of the gadgetry to which they are accustomed if again caught off guard. Even if the entire communications infrastructure remains intact, US Army commanders should not expect that the early phase unconventional warfare environment is conducive to instant reporting, lengthy documents, and direct control. In these phases, the priorities will be to survive and build a guerrilla organization. Future US Army leaders should think, plan, and train accordingly.

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<sup>142</sup> Volckmann, *We Remained*, 237.

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